



**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION III
1650 Arch Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103-2029**

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INVESTIGATE THE WATER YOU'RE DRINKING: LOOK FOR THE NEW WATER QUALITY REPORTS

**W. Michael McCabe, Regional Administrator
EPA mid-Atlantic region**

Do you know where your drinking water comes from? Do you know whether or not to drink the water when traveling? How safe is the water in that small town where you are sending your son or daughter to college?

If you live in the city of Philadelphia, you may have just read the Water Department's water quality report in local newspapers.

The public has a right to know this. In fact, people have demanded it. So the Environmental Protection Agency is now requiring water systems - - the places that supply drinking water - - to begin telling the public what is in their drinking water. Philadelphia is ahead of the curve. Philadelphia's water quality report isn't required until next year, but they are getting things started in the right direction to meet the needs of consumers and the EPA mandate.

Similar to food packaging labels, the consumer confidence reports will be available annually for the public to see what is in its drinking water. The information will be in an easy-to-read table. All community water providers must water quality reports by October 1999.

Annual consumer confidence reports required by EPA are the first new drinking water regulations in several years, and the first dealing with the public's right to know under the Safe Drinking Water Act Amendments of 1996.

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Customer Service Hotline: 1-800-438-2474

This new rule was developed in consultation with water suppliers, environmental groups, and state regulatory agencies. The consumer confidence reports will answer many questions, including:

- * the source of water, and its susceptibility to contamination.
- * a table showing detected contaminants and corresponding drinking water standards.
- * compliance with other provisions of the drinking water regulations.
- * educational information about contaminants detected and any health effects.
- * telephone numbers for obtaining additional information, including the water systems number and EPA's toll-free Safe Drinking Water Hotline (1-800-426-4791).

The new reports may also contain additional information including historical facts, plant tour availability, watershed initiatives, treatment upgrades or plant expansions and even conservation techniques. Each water system has a unique story to tell, along with the required points to paint a full picture for its water users.

Water suppliers should view this new rule as a stepping stone in their customer communications. Providing the public with useful information to make informed decisions is part of their responsibility. This information will supplement public notification that water systems must provide upon discovering any violation of a contaminant standard.

As the public's understanding grows, public participation in the protection and delivery of safe drinking water will increase just like recycling grew from a good idea to a standard practice.

When you get a special brochure in your water bill, take the time to look at it. Study it, save it, and if you have questions, call your water supplier and get the answers. It is your right to know.

EPA makes other resources available to you through its website. Check out www.epa.gov/ogwdw/ccr/ccrfact.html for information about Consumer Confidence Reporting. Check it out and learn about your water system. To locate watershed information see www.epa.gov/surf.